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# COMMUNICATION WITH THE VETERAN:

## FAIRNESS AND APPEALS AMONG GRANTED 010'S AND 110'S

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Each of the seven items below has a clear relationship with whether or not **a veteran who had a 010 or 110 claim granted** felt her or his claim was fairly evaluated and whether or not that veteran will appeal her or his decision.

- How well claim process steps are explained,
- How well VA keeps veterans informed of their claim status,
- Whether VA is able to give information about a veteran's claim over the telephone,
- Whether the decision letter clearly explains all of the reasons for the claim decision,
- Whether the decision letter explains the decision in an understandable way,
- Whether the appeals process is clearly explained, and,
- Whether VA fully addresses all questions and concerns of the veteran.

If all seven items are handled fully and correctly by VA, a veteran will be more likely to feel the claim evaluation process was fair and will be less likely to appeal the claim decision. Some noteworthy findings follow below:

- Of those who felt the claim process steps were clearly explained, 55.5 percent thought their evaluation was fair. But only 32.1 percent of those who **did not** feel the steps were clearly explained felt their evaluation was fair.
- About 11.0 percent of veterans who thought they were kept informed of their claim status appealed their decision. But nearly three times (30.3 percent) that many who **did not** feel they were kept informed of their claim status appealed.
- Slightly more than 52.0 percent of those who were able to get claim information over the telephone said their claims were evaluated fairly. But only 27.5 percent of those who **were not able** to get claim information over the phone thought their claim evaluation was fair.
- Of those who felt the decision letter clearly explained all the reasons for the decision, 13.0 percent said they appealed the decision. But a substantially larger percent said they appealed (30.3 percent) if they felt the reasons for their claim decision were not clearly explained.

- About 57.0 percent of veterans who thought the decision letter explained the decision in an understandable way felt the evaluation of their claim was fair. But of those who *did not* think the decision letter was understandable, only 20.5 percent thought their claim was fairly evaluated.
- If a veteran felt the appeal process was clearly explained, she/he was much more likely to feel that the claim evaluation was handled fairly than if the appeal process was not explained. About 53.0 percent of veterans who thought the appeal process was clearly explained felt their claim evaluation was fair, compared with only 15.9 percent of those who did not think the appeal process was clearly explained.
- Veterans who did not think VA fully addressed all of their questions and concerns were more than three times more likely to appeal their decision. About 11.0 percent of those who thought VA addressed all of their questions said they appealed, while 35.6 of those who did not think VA addressed all questions and concerns said they appealed their decision.

These statistics show that satisfactory communication with the veteran throughout the claim process will result in more satisfied and informed veterans and less VA "re-work" later on in the process (i.e. dealing with appeals).

Each of these seven communications issues had a distinct effect on whether or not **granted 010 and 110** veterans thought claim evaluations were fair and whether or not veterans were likely to appeal their decisions.

Although the results cited here are specific to **granted 010's and 110's**, similar findings hold true for denied 010's and 110's, as well as granted and denied 020's: improving communication with the veteran will lead to more veterans feeling their claim evaluations were fair and less veterans appealing their claim decisions.

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